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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/944,534	08/31/2001	Blake MingQi Dong	47013/PAN/S850	3296
23363	7590	08/18/2006	EXAMINER	
CHRISTIE, PARKER & HALE, LLP			BASS, JON M	
PO BOX 7068				
PASADENA, CA 91109-7068			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			3639	

DATE MAILED: 08/18/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/944,534	DONG ET AL.
	Examiner Jon Bass	Art Unit 3639

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE ____ MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 31 August 2001.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-39 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) Claim(s) 1-39 is/are rejected.
7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

STATUS OF CLAIMS

1. Claims 1-39 are pending in this application. Claims 38 and 39 have been added. No claims have been amended.
2. Arguments filed on January 13, 2006 have been fully considered.
3. Applicant argues (with regard to claims 1, 21 and 33) that Liechti (5,715,164) fails to teach in full "free postage upon expiration. The Examiner notes that by combining Liecht in conjunction with Fredman, (6,526,393), brings into an existence an invention that deals with expiring free postage. Fredman teaches in column 2, lines 35-46; a method of prepaid postage/delivery with an expiration date (free expiring postage). Fredman further explains in column three, lines 51-64; a time controlled prepaid delivery chart. In addition, column three, lines 1-9, explains how calculations are tallied based upon a different rates.
4. In regard to claims 2-20, 22-32 and 34-37, these claims depend from independent claims 1, 21 and 33. For the reasons set below, the claims remain rejected.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hans Liecht (U.S. Patent Number 5,715,164), hereinafter referred to as Liecht in view of Robert Fredman (U.S. Patent Number 6,526,393), hereinafter referenced as Fredman.

As Per Claim 1, 21 and 33:

Liecht discloses incorporates the transferring a first portion of said expiring free postage to a postage meter, Col.2, lines 40-45, controls the amount of credit extended to the meter use)resetting balance of said free postage account upon expiration of said free postage, [{col.9, lines 26-28}; meter resetting], but lacks controlling the distribution of expiring free postage. However, Fredman discloses a method for controlling the distribution of expiring free postage [{figure 1; predetermined effective expiration date}], comprising the steps of, storing a second

portion of said expiring free postage in a free postage account (See fig 2 details). Therefore, it would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify Fredman's invention with method and system in conjunction with Liecht's invention system and method to emulate an invention that deals with printing free postage with a postage meter system with motivation taught by Liecht as being enabling a postage meter system to print free postage

As Per Claim 2:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of establishing minimum threshold for said postage meter and transferring a block of postage from said free postage account to said postage meter when balance of said postage meter is less than or equal to said threshold, [{col.5, lines 22-25}; the value of the ascending register may not exceed the postage amount limit at any time].

As Per Claim 3:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with said block of transferred postage, [{col.5, lines 57-60}; the meter may not process more mail items than the allowed piece limit].

As Per Claim 4:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of storing purchased postage in an available postage account, [{col.2, lines 30-32}; temporarily store new upper and lower bound values].

As Per Claim 5:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of utilizing said expiring free postage before said purchased postage, [{col.2, lines 43-45}; meter user is billed for meter reset amounts control credit extended].

As Per Claim 6:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of displaying sum of total expiring free postage and purchased postage in an available postage field, [{fig 2, 215} display].

As Per Claim 7:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing said available postage field in accordance with a print transaction, [{col.4, lines 14-15}; printing of desired postage on mail items].

As Per Claim 8:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of utilizing said expiring free postage before said purchased

postage, [{col.5, lines 26-30}; connection of the meter to data center may a new postage amount limit be established].

As Per Claim 9:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising notifying user upon expiration of said free postage, [{col.6, lines 41-43}; the user is then informed of the termination of communication].

As Per Claim 10:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of storing purchased postage and balance of the postage meter in a descending register, [{col.5, lines 12-15}; descending register in a meter is used to track the amount].

As Per Claim 11:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing descending register in accordance with a print transaction, [{col.5, line 14}; register used to keep track of an amount of postage printed].

As Per Claim 12:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the steps of determining whether postage meter balance is equal to or greater than a predetermined threshold, [{col.5, lines 24-27}; the meter

becomes inoperative as soon as the register is greater than or equal to postage amount limit].

As Per Claim 13:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of transferring a block of free postage from said free postage account to said postage meter in accordance with said threshold determination, [{col.5, lines 31-32}]; the postage amount limit is adjusted by data cent depeding on the users creditworthiness].

As Per Claim 14:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the steps of determining validity of said expiring free postage in response to receipt of a print postage request and wherein said free postage account is reset in accordance with said validity determination, [{col.5, lines 42-44}]; data center has full control over the amount of operation granted depending on the trustworthiness of the meter user].

As Per Claim 15:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of determining whether balance of said free postage is equal to or greater than value of requested postage and transferring a block of free postage from said free postage account to said postage meter in accordance with the amount determination, [{col.5, lines

24-27}; the meter becomes inoperative as soon as the register is greater than or equal to postage amount limit].

As Per Claim 16:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with the transferred postage, [{col.5, lines 24-27}; the meter becomes inoperative as soon as the register is greater than or equal to postage amount limit].

As Per Claim 17:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination, [{col.4, lines 14-16}; effectuating the printing of desired postage on mail items].

As Per Claim 18:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of determining whether balance of total purchased postage and free postage is equal to or greater than value of requested postage, [{col.5, lines 24-27}; the meter becomes inoperative as soon as the register is greater than or equal to postage amount limit].

As Per Claim 19:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of 25 generating error message in accordance with said amount determination, [{col.4, lines 30-32}; detection scheme for detecting errors].

As Per Claim 20:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination, [{col.4, lines 14-16}; effectuating the printing of desired postage on mail items].

As Per Claim 22:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with said transferred postage, [{col.5, lines 30-35}; postage amounts limit is adjusted by data center depending on credit].

As Per Claim 23:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of displaying sum of the expiring free postage and purchased postage in an available postage field, [{fig 2, 215} and {fig 6A, 623}, display and amount field].

As Per Claim 24:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing said available postage field in accordance with a print transaction, [{fig 6A}; amount field].

As Per Claim 25:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of 25 utilizing said expiring free postage before said purchased postage, [{col.6, lines 64-67}; packet includes control command field which indicates the meter change to its charge plan].

As Per Claim 26:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the steps of determining validity of said expiring free postage in response to receipt of said print postage request, wherein said free postage account is reset in accordance with said validity determination, [{col.5, lines 30-32}; postage amount limit is adjusted by data depending on users credit wothiness].

As Per Claim 27:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of determining whether balance of free postage account is equal to or greater than value of requested postage and wherein the step of transferring a portion of the expiring free postage to said postage meter comprises transferring a portion of the expiring free postage in accordance with the amount determination,

[{col.5, lines 24-27}; the meter becomes inoperative as soon as the register is greater than or equal to postage amount limit and {col.2, lines 44-45}; controls the amount of credit extended to the meter user].

As Per Claim 28:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of decrementing said free postage account in accordance with the transferred postage, [{col.2, lines 44-45}; controls the amount of credit extended to the meter user].

As Per Claim 29:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination, [{col.4, lines 14-16}; effectuating the printing of desired postage on mail items].

As Per Claim 30:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of determining whether balance of total purchased postage and free postage is equal to or greater than value of requested postage, [{col.5, lines 24-27}; the meter becomes inoperative as soon as the register is greater than or equal to postage amount limit].

As Per Claim 31:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of generating error message in accordance with said amount determination, [{col.4, lines31-33}; detection scheme for detecting errors].

As Per Claim 32:

Liechti discloses a method for further comprising the step of generating print image in accordance with said amount determination, [{col.4, lines 14-16}; effectuating the printing of desired postage on mail items].

As Per Claim 34:

Liechti discloses a method further comprising means for decrementing said free postage account in accordance with said transferred postage, [{col.5, lines 57-60}; the meter may not process more mail items than the allowed piece limit].

As Per Claim 35:

Liechti discloses a method for The PC postage system further comprising 15 means for displaying sum of the expiring free postage and purchased postage in an available postage field, [{fig 2, 215} display].

As Per Claim 36:

Liechti discloses a method for PC postage system of further comprising means for decrementing said available postage field in accordance with a print transaction, [{col.4, lines 14-15}; printing of desired postage on mail items].

As Per Claim 37:

Liechti discloses a method for The PC postage system further comprising means for determining validity of said expiring free postage in response to receipt of said print postage request, wherein said free postage account is reset in accordance with said validity determination, [{col.5, lines 42-44}; data center has full control over the amount of operation granted depending on the trustworthiness of the meter user].

As Per Claim 38:

Fredman discloses a method of managing free postage [{column 2, lines 35-38}, prepaid postage/ delivery with an expiration date] in a computer postage system comprising:

Checking for free postage availability, (fig 1-see details);
Checking for expiration of free postage, (fig 1- see details);
However Fredman does not explicitly teach: Nonetheless, Liechti discloses generating an account to track free postage separate from purchased postage, [{col.2, lines 20-27}, statistical data on the number of mail items using the counters in the postage

meters]; and receiving a request to print postage, {column 4, lines 13-16; printing of desired postage on mail item}; Setting a balance of the account to zero I the free postage has expired, [{column 2, lines 35-45}, postage amount limit where the meter is billed for reset). Therefore, it would have been obvious for one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to modify Fredman's invention with method and system in conjunction with Liecht's invention system and method to emulate an invention that deals with printing free postage with a postage meter system with motivation taught by Liecht as being enabling a postage meter system to print free postage

As Per Claim 39:

Fredman discloses the method of managing free postage in a computer system comprising:

Applying available free postage to the request to print postage if free postage is available, (See Fig 1 details);

Applying purchased postage to the request to print if free postage is available (See Fig 1 details).

Conclusion

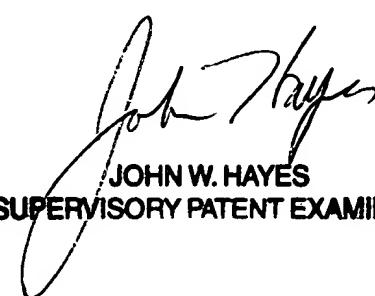
Any concerns in regard to this communication, the examiner **Jon Bass** can be reached at **(571) 272-6905** between the hours of **9-6pm Monday through Friday**. The fax number for the establishment where the application is being process is **(571) 273-8300**.

If an attempt to reach the examiner is unsuccessful for any reason, the examiner's immediate supervisor, **John Hayes** can be reached at **(571) 272-6708**.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-271-9197 (toll free).

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks
C/O Technology Center 3600
Washington, D.C. 20231


JOHN W. HAYES

SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER